

# NRCS Alabama Current Developments



July 2005

## From The *Acting State Conservationist* - *Ron Harris*

It has been my privilege to spend a few weeks in Alabama as the Acting State Conservationist. In that short time, I've attended several meetings, met many of the conservation partners in the state, and observed the work of Alabama NRCS employees. I'm impressed with what I see. I commend you for the work you are doing. The key for NRCS employees at the state level is to simply do their jobs well, and get as much conservation on the ground as possible. That's what you've been about here in Alabama, and that should be the focus in the future.

I want to express my appreciation to you for making me feel welcome during this interim period. The new State Conservationist, Gary Kobylski, has a lot to look forward to as he takes over the

leadership of the state. So, I say "thank you" and "best wishes" to Gary.



*Ron Harris (R), Acting STC, visits with (L- R) Estus Walker, Richard Collier, and Earl Norton at the RC&D Annual Meeting in Point Clear.*

## Alabama NRCS Welcomes Back Gary Kobylski

Gary, a dedicated conservationist for over 27 years, returns to Alabama in July as State Conservationist. Gary and his wife Rhonda, both graduates of Auburn University, are looking forward to calling Alabama home once again.



Gary has served at all levels within NRCS-- field, state, and regional offices, and national headquarters. He returns to Alabama from Washington, DC, where he was the National Environmental Quality

Incentives Program (EQIP) Manager and a Resource Conservationist on the Operations Management and Oversight Division. He also provided program and operations management assistance to eight states in the Midwest Region for nine years.

Gary shared a conservation quote by Aldo Leopold, "When land does well for its owner, and the owner does well by his land; when both end up better by reason of their partnership, we have conservation." Gary then responded by saying, "It is my goal to continue fostering a partnership between our landowners, and our many conservation partners to ensure generations to come will enjoy the bounty and beauty of the land in Alabama."

# Outreach in Alabama

## Petty Farm Hosts Grazing Field Day

by James Currington, District Conservationist, Geneva, AL

Alabama NRCS was pleased to have gained the attention of the NRCS Chief for the first time in many years. Chief Bruce Knight visited Geneva County as the SWCD/NRCS and the Wiregrass RC&D Council hosted a "Managing Intensive Grazing Grass-Fed Beef Field Day on the Frank Petty Farm," south of Geneva, on Saturday, April 23.

Liberty Chapel Baptist Church graciously provided meeting facilities for the program. A field tour was held immediately following lunch.

About 50 landowners and producers attended the meeting. Producers visited, inspected, and observed on-site how intensive grazing for livestock can be maintained on a small alternative farm to potentially increase profits. Mr. Petty demonstrated how cattle, goats, and rabbits can be grown and marketed on a small farm. Marketing representatives were on hand to discuss marketing options for producers.

Chief Knight was on the program, along with Louis Register, Geneva County SWCD; Willie Durr, County Agent from Dothan; Arthur Jackson, Owner of Down South Food; Rev. Willie J. Battle, President of



*Chief Knight talked with farmers at the Grazing Field Day in Geneva.*

the Wiregrass Farmers Cooperative; and many other dignitaries from across the state.

Mr. Petty received a Conservation Innovation Grant for Limited Resource Farmers from The United Christian Community Association (TUCCA) administered through USDA-NRCS. Chief Knight commended the efforts of the Wiregrass Farmers Cooperative and encouraged landowners to follow conservation practices that allow for optimal grazing and minimal environmental impacts from over-grazing.

Participants saw how successful the grazing practices were that had been installed on the Petty Farm.



*Geneva County NRCS/SWCD and Wiregrass RC&D employees were on hand as area limited resource farmers and others welcomed NRCS Chief Bruce Knight to a field day at the Frank Petty Farm in Geneva County.*



## Alabama NRCS Hosts Program Delivery Initiative for Indian Tribes

by Julie Best, Public Affairs Specialist, Auburn, AL

The Poarch Band of Creek Indian Reservation near Atmore, Alabama, was the host site for an American Indian Program Delivery Initiative held May 8-11. Individuals representing nine tribes from as far north as Maine and south to Florida, participated. Addressing the group, Richard Coombe, Regional Assistant Chief, NRCS East Region, said, "NRCS is doing many things to help America's first farmers reach their conservation goals. About 125 tribal nations are now participating in NRCS programs. NRCS is working with tribal leaders across America to support their efforts to bring economic opportunity and an enhanced quality of life to tribal members. That effort is working well. According to the most recent census, the number of American Indians in production farming is increasing. NRCS wants to ensure that America's first farmers continue to make a comeback."

Annabelle Romero, Director, USDA's Office of Native American Programs, praised the work of the Native American working groups. "USDA's Native American working group is involved in everything we are doing among Indian tribes. The agencies are the ones that do the work, and I rely on them," Romero said.

Noller Herbert, NRCS Tribal Relations Coordinator, Washington, D.C., applauded the coordination of the meeting. "Each tribe, each person

*Regional Assistant Chief Richard Coombe said, "Over the years, we came close to seeing the last of America's first farmers. By the early 1990's, there were approximately 7,000 American Indian farmers in the United States. The situation has changed in recent years. The 2002 Agricultural Census shows there are now more than 24,000 American Indian and Alaska Native farm operations. America's first farmers are making a comeback, and USDA and NRCS are helping."*



has a story. We are made up of different stories. Coming together in meetings such as this to share our stories is strengthening. As we share, we understand and learn," said Herbert.

In addition to presentations on various USDA programs available to American Indians, participants toured portions of the Reservation of the Poarch Band of Creek Indians. The tribe has an active Economic Development Program to further improve the business endeavors of the Tribe and tribal members. Among their business holdings are:

- The Best Western Motel, consisting of 88 rooms and other facilities for meetings and conferences. Located adjacent to the motel is the Creek Family Restaurant. This complex was purchased by the tribe in 1985 and has proved to be a profitable business as well as provides employment for tribal members. Meeting participants used these facilities.
- Muskogee Metal Works is a metal stamping firm which specializes in the manufacturing of an assortment of metal parts. Muskogee Metal Works was purchased in 1988.
- Perdido River Farms is comprised of approximately 1,160 acres of tribal land. The land base is utilized for agricultural, aquacultural, and livestock grazing purposes. A pecan orchard is located on 178 acres. Twenty-five acres have been devoted to catfish farming. Currently, 12 acres of ponds have been constructed. Row crops farmed include wheat, corn, cotton, peanuts, and soybeans. Much of the row crop land is leased to area farmers. The farm currently has a cattle herd of about 350 cows. Perdido River



**L-R, Eddie Tullis, Chairman of the Poarch Band of Creek Indians, host tribe; Richard Coombe, Regional Assistant Chief, USDA-NRCS East Region; Annabelle Romero, Director, USDA Office of Native American Programs; and Keller George, President, United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc.**

Farms has a \$188,000 EQIP contract. Practices to be installed include cross fencing with water troughs to better use the pasture; constructing shade for the cattle; fencing drainage ditches to improve water quality; installing wells to supply water to the cattle; and planting long-leaf pine in critical areas of a previous stone quarry.

- Magnolia Branch is a 4,700-acre nature preserve that is under development. Picnic areas have been developed. Long-range plans call for camping facilities, horseback riding trails, and canoe/tubing floats.

David Elliott, Alabama Native American Liaison and overall coordinator of the meeting, ended the meeting with these comments, "During this meeting we were able to meet new friends and build relationships. Together we can make a difference in maintaining, protecting, and enhancing our natural resources so future generations can have the privilege of enjoying them as we have. Remember, we are painting a picture on the landscape as we travel life's journey. May we paint a picture of hope, peace, trust, and commitment so that barriers can be broken and the sky the limit on the things we can accomplish by working together."



*Meeting participants were given a guided tour of the Muscogee Metal Works facility.*



*Attendees join in Friendship dance.*

*The Magnolia Branch Recreation Site is being developed by the Poarch Creek Indian Tribe for use by the local community and to attract tourism to the area.*



*Tribal Dance Troup*



*Senior Citizens of the Tribe serve dinner.*

*Tunderclouds and the resulting summer shower could not dampen the spirit of the evening as meeting attendees enjoyed the Magnolia Branch facilities. After dinner, an award-winning Indian dance troupe entertained with songs, native dances, and a audience participation Friendship dance.*



# Conservation Education Events



**Renea Dyer teaches Lauderdale County students about soils at a F.A.W.N. \* (Forestry and Awareness Week Now) workshop.**



**Sammy Harris is teaching "soils simile" at Cullman County F. A. W. N. \***



**Don Nelson, Soil Conservationist, and Joey Koptis, Soil Scientist, present at the Soils Station at the 2005 Clarke County F.A.W.N. \***



**Lee County NRCS/SWCD participated in Smiths Station Elementary School Earth Day.**



**Lauderdale County student shows a Rain Stick she made at the 2005 Water Festival.**

**\* More information on the F.A.W.N program is on the web at: [http://www.forestry.state.al.us/publication/TF\\_publications/education/fawn.htm](http://www.forestry.state.al.us/publication/TF_publications/education/fawn.htm)**



**Poster contest entries in Covington County.**

# Program News

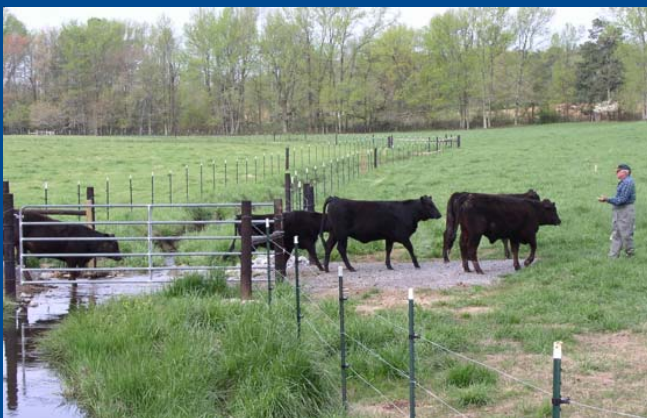
## ***EQIP Helps Farmer Protect Stream***

By Stan Franklin, District Conservationist, Marshall County, AL

Nelson Kennamer was not pleased with his cattle loitering in the stream that runs through his pasture. He was not pleased that the sides of the stream eroded as cows climbed up and down the banks. He was not pleased that he could not selectively graze the pastures on each side of the stream. So he did something about it.

With help from NRCS and the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP), Mr Kennamer improved his situation. He installed fencing on both sides of the stream and a couple of cattle crossings. These improvements reduces nutrients and sediment in the stream and provides a convenient method to maximize forage through rotation.

***Using EQIP funds, Mr. Kennamer improved the water quality on his farm by installing fencing and stream crossings.***



## ***Cawaco RC&D Helps Establish Park on Five Mile Creek Greenway***

On May 14<sup>th</sup> a ribbon-cutting ceremony was held in Tarrant on the first park of the Five Mile Creek Greenway, a system of parks and trails that will stretch along a 28-mile corridor of Five Mile Creek in north Jefferson County. Before the ceremony, over 200 volunteers assisted with a cleanup and helped construct the new community park. Volunteers collected two dumpsters of trash and debris from the banks and stream bed. They planted native trees, wildflowers, and flowering grasses, and helped stabilize the streambank by planting river birch, black willow, and swamp sunflowers.

The event displayed what can be accomplished through intergovernmental and community cooperation. Several government officials spent the day at the event, including the mayors of Brookside, Graysville, and Tarrant, as well as representatives from Congressman Spencer Bachus' office, Jefferson County Commissioner Bettye Fine Collins, and Senator Jack Biddle.

In total, about \$30,000 of donations and in-kind contributions were made by sponsors for the event.

The Five Mile Creek Greenway Partnership was established through a Memorandum of Agreement to commit to the development of a system of park and greenway corridors along the entire length of Five Mile Creek. Members include Cawaco RC&D; the Cities of Birmingham, Brookside, Center Point, Fultondale, Graysville, and Tarrant; the Jefferson County Commission; the Black Warrior Cahaba Rivers Land Trust; and the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham.



***Volunteers construct a walking trail and large planters in the new park.***



## RC&D Annual Meeting

The Alabama Association of RC&D Councils held its annual meeting at Point Clear, June 1-3, hosted by the Gulf Coast RC&D Council. The meeting was well attended by council members, NRCS employees, and interested parties. Sharon Ruggi, President of the National RC&D Association, and Jeanette Jamieson, National Legislative Liaison and contact for the Southeast Region participated. Award winners this year were Paul Kennedy, Vickie Mitchell, and the Gulf Coast RC&D Council. Congratulations to these folks for outstanding accomplishments!



**Robert Harbison, Chairman of the Alabama RC&D Councils, presented awards to Vickie Mitchell for Outstanding Assistant of the Year, Paul Kennedy for Outstanding RC&D Coordinator of the Year, and the Gulf Coast RC&D for Outstanding Council of the Year.**



## Goodbye To Jeff Holloway

Goodbye and best wishes are in order for another Alabama NRCS employee. Jeff Holloway will be leaving Alabama and moving across the state line to work on the state staff in Georgia. Jeff's career in Alabama began in 1984. After spending a few months in Ozark, he moved to Oxford and has been there ever since. Jeff says, "I've worked on the project side of things, working with field design and overseeing contracts. For the last 10 years, I've worked with conservation operations, helping field office staffs and making sure we get conservation on the ground in a way that meets our engineering standards. It's been a varied experience. The best thing about the experience in Alabama, and I'm trusting that it will be the same when I get to Georgia, is the people that I've met. I've made some life-long friends; I don't intend to forget the people that I've worked with. I've had people that have invested a lot into my life, teaching me. I think a college degree basically says that you have the ability to learn, and then you learn how to do things when you get on the job. I've had great teachers. I'll be going onto the state staff in Georgia, the water resource staff doing design work, primarily with watershed rehabilitation. That's an area that I have some limited experience in but I don't have state level experience. I'm hoping that will give me experience that I don't have and hopefully a few years down the road, I'll qualify for a state conservation engineer job." Your friends in Alabama wish you all the best, Jeff.



## Retiree Passes Away

Retiree Charlie R. Mitchell of Ozark died June 15 in the Ozark Health and Rehabilitation Center. He was 93. He retired from the USDA-Soil Conservation Service after 27 years of service. Memorial contributions can be given to the First United Methodist Church Family Life Center Fund or to the Methodist Children's Home.

Cards can be sent to:

Mrs. Mary M. Mitchell  
708 Joseph Drive  
Ozark, Alabama 36360

# Training

## Pond 101

By Perry Oakes, State Conservation Engineer,  
NRCS, Auburn, AL

Over the years, NRCS has helped landowners investigate, design, and construct about 70,000 small ponds. Even though we help with ponds less now than before, we are still considered the “small earth pond” experts. An introductory course called Pond 101 was introduced a few years back to provide new employees with information on the planning, site investigation, design, and construction of ponds. While the course is primarily focused on ponds, many other support topics are covered including: conservation planning for ponds, policies, soil mechanics, soil investigation, wetlands, permitting, watershed delineations, hydrology, hydraulics, design tools, construction, maintenance, safety, and others. After the training session this year, almost 70 students in Alabama will have completed the course.



## Red Water Blues Field Days II Planned for 2005

The Alabama Erosion and Sediment Control Partnership will again host field days to provide erosion and sediment control information to those involved with construction site management. The 2004 Red Water Blues Field Days were a great success with over 400 individuals participating. We plan to build upon those experiences and offer even more in 2005. A variety of sites will be used to emphasize the proper installation and maintenance of practices and products.

Qualified Credentialed Inspectors (QCIs) certified through the Home Builders Association of Alabama (HBAA) can meet annual certification requirements for



2005 by attending a field day and an early morning session provided by HBAA (additional fee required).

Advance registration (\$30, includes lunch) will begin in mid-July and will be handled jointly by the Alabama Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society and the Jefferson County Soil and Water Conservation Foundation. Registration after a cut-off date will be \$40.

The 2005 Red Water Field Days II schedule is:

- |                |            |
|----------------|------------|
| • September 15 | Decatur    |
| • September 22 | Prattville |
| • September 29 | Enterprise |
| • October 13   | Mobile     |

For more information, view the field day brochure and registration form on the homepage of the Alabama Soil and Water Conservation Committee (<http://www.swcc.state.al.us>), or contact the local soil and water conservation district office. Pre-registration is encouraged to help the sponsors plan for transportation and meals.

## High Crop Residue Conservation Tillage Field Days

Following unusually wet planting conditions this spring, more farmers are exploring the merits of no-till, high residue production practices.

In an effort to introduce more farmers to these techniques, the Alabama Cooperative Extension System (ACES), in partnership with NRCS and the USDA National Soil Dynamics Laboratory, sponsored crop tours June 21 on the Kenneth Sanders farm in northeast Coffee County, and June 23 on the Jimmy Blythe farm in Lawrence County.

Richard Petcher, a regional ACES agent and a tour organizer for the Coffee County tour, says the tour was prompted in part by the unusually heavy rainfall this spring. “With all the heavy rainfall in March and April, we’ve seen a lot of soil erosion and planting difficulties, especially in conventionally-tilled corn,” Petcher said. “No-till farmers, on the other hand, have had a much easier time planting despite the heavy rainfall. This has prompted other farmers to give no-till farming a second look.”

No-till production practices, he says, also have enabled farmers to save on production costs. It reduces the amount of time spent preparing fields for planting and requires fewer trips to cultivate and spray.

Speakers included producers and specialists from ACES, the Soil Dynamics Lab, and NRCS.



## Awards and Grants

### ***Earl Norton Named SWCS Fellow of the Year***

SCS/NRCS retiree (1995) Earl Norton has been named a recipient of one of the most prestigious awards of the national Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS). The 2005 Fellow Award will be presented to Earl at their annual conference in August in Rochester, New York.

The Fellow Award recognizes Society members who have performed exceptional service in advocating the conservation of soil, water, and related natural resources. The award is given for professional excellence in practicing, investigating, administering, or teaching soil and water conservation or closely related fields.

As an SCS/NRCS soil conservationist for about 35 years, Earl contributed significantly to the efforts of the agency at the state and national levels. Since his retirement, he has continued to work for the protection of soil and water resources through involvement with the International Erosion Control Association, the Alabama Chapter of SWCS, and the Alabama Soil and Water Conservation Committee.

Earl has been a member of SWCS for about 40 years. He has worked to bring new partners into the Alabama Chapter, notably, the Alabama Department of Transportation and the Home Builders Association of Alabama. His efforts have brought about a greater awareness, interest, and implementation of sediment and erosion control on construction sites. His efforts through the Certified Professional in Erosion and Sediment Control (CPESC), Inc. have also led to a greater number of experienced sediment and erosion control professionals.

Earl has chaired the Alabama Chapter's CPESC Committee since it was organized in 1995. This committee supports the CPESC program by offering the Exam Review Course and the exam twice a year. Between 1995 and 2004, CPESCs in Alabama increased from 4 to over 60. People from seven states have come to Alabama to take the exam.

Earl assisted the Alabama SWCS Chapter in developing a 5-party agreement that resulted in the Alabama Soil and Water Conservation Committee initiating a state-wide erosion and sediment control program in 2001. He has served as the program's coordinator and his accomplishments are noteworthy.

Earl is the primary author of the revised Alabama Handbook for Erosion Control, Sediment Control, and

Stormwater Management on Construction Sites and Urban Areas, published in 2003.

Earl was not satisfied just to have published the Handbook. He realized that the book had to be in the hands of engineers, designers, and contractors and needed to be understood and used.

Working closely with partners, Earl coordinated seminars across the state. To date, 13 day-long seminars have been conducted, training approximately 750 people. Over 900 copies of the Handbook have been distributed.

Norton's vision also included a "pocket version" of the two-volume handbook, especially for contractor use. The Handbook pocket version was prepared and distributed to participants at field days and is available to anyone interested in obtaining one.

With the Handbook written and available on-line and extensive training conducted, Earl was still not satisfied. He wanted "on the ground" demonstrations of installation and use of the practices illustrated in the Handbook. He coordinated "Red Water Blues," a series of five erosion and sediment control field days across Alabama in 2004. About 400 people participated. Additional events are scheduled for 2005.

Perry Oakes, NRCS State Conservation Engineer, said, "Earl Norton has almost single-handedly brought the major players in Alabama's erosion and sediment control efforts together to develop a program for the state that is showing major changes on the landscape. Alabama's environment will forever be improved as a result of Earl's work."

In nominating Earl for this award, Shannon Weaver, Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations-East, said she struggled to put in writing his many contributions to the conservation of Alabama's natural resources. We usually think that retired folks crave rest and relaxation, but Earl continues to extol his passion of conservation and using his gift of working with people in a tireless effort to inform and enlighten others about the importance of protecting our natural resources.



## ***Libohova Selected for 2005 NRCS Education Grants Program***

Zamir Libohova, soil scientist in the Tuscaloosa MLRA office, has been selected to participate in the 2005 NRCS Education Grants Program. The Education Grants Program is a scholarship program which provides development opportunities for



employees in grades GS 1-10. The program is designed to give highly motivated employees opportunities for career growth, development, and change. Zamir will be attending classes at the University of Alabama. Paul Swenson, Human Resources Officer, says, "It's been some

time since Alabama has had anyone participate in the Education Grants Program. Zamir applied and was selected. It will be an opportunity for Zamir and a benefit to NRCS." Charles Adams, Director of the National Employee Development Center, says, "By your selection for a grant, NRCS is recognizing the contributions you have already made and your ability to contribute to our future." Best wishes as you hit the books, Zamir.

## ***NRCS to Cooperate with SARE Project***

Dr. Mary Miller-Goodman with the AU Department of Agronomy and Soils has been awarded a \$120,000 Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) grant. The project, entitled "Understanding Plant-Soil-Livestock Interactions: A Key to Enhanced Sustainability in Southern-Pine Silvopasture Systems" is designed to produce data that will help decision makers better understand the ecological interactions which are the foundation of sustainability in Southern-pine silvopasture systems. Research will focus on how changes over time in the plant community structure of grazed silvopasture modify soil health or the capacity of the soil to function. The duration of the project is three years, 2005-2008. NRCS employees Ben Moore and Eddie Jolley will be actively involved in the project as will the Plant Materials Center at Americus, Georgia.



***The Marshall County Soil and Water Conservation District recognized local citizens for outstanding contributions to improving and protecting natural resources. Receiving awards are (l-r) : Randy and Rachel Bynum of Douglas; Annita and David Sumners of Boaz; Ginny Summerlin of Guntersville; Nelson Kennamer and Jason Carnes of Grant; Beverly and Roger Lang of Alder Springs; Ben Gore; Barrett Walls; and Greg Copeland, Federal Land Bank of North Alabama.***  
***By Stan Franklin***



# Alabama Chapter of SWCS Holds Annual Meeting

“Managing Our Landscapes for Multiple Uses” was the theme of the 2005 Alabama Chapter of SWCS Annual Meeting, held at the Botanical Gardens in Birmingham, June 8-10. The two and a half day event began with a field trip featuring various construction sites in the Birmingham area. The tour stops emphasized products and new procedures for erosion and sediment control.

Formal presentations focusing on the municipal, agricultural, and forestry approach to managing the landscape were presented on Thursday morning. The afternoon sessions dealt with wetlands—functions and values, regulations, mitigation banking, and plant materials.

At the business meeting on Friday morning, awards were presented to:

- Alabama Department of Transportation – Special Achievement Award for erosion and sediment control on transportation construction sites during 2003-2005



*A heavy rain provided an ideal opportunity for one of the exhibitors to demonstrate a new sediment control device.*



*The Alabama Department of Transportation explained recent procedures implemented to help control erosion and sediment on highway construction sites.*

- Perry Oakes – Distinguished Service Award in recognition of outstanding service in revising the Alabama BMP handbook
- Ben Moore – Outstanding leadership of the Chapter for 2005

The Alabama Chapter of SWCS will receive three national awards at the upcoming National meeting—Professional Development, Chapter Achievement, and Outstanding Chapter for the South Central Region. The excellent Chapter Annual Meeting program is just one example of the cooperative efforts that make the Alabama Chapter excel.

The Alabama Chapter of SWCS is indeed an outstanding chapter. Tracy Cole is the incoming president. If you are not currently one of the 153 Alabama Chapter members, consider joining. The Chapter activities provide numerous opportunities for professional development.

# Workshops Offer Real Hope to Real Communities

Over 50 participants completed the Your Town, Alabama, Designing Our Future workshop held at Camp McDowell near Nauvoo, Alabama, June 15-17, 2005. They attended interactive presentations and worked with a team to plan a hypothetical town. After attending this intensive three-day workshop, many participants have returned to their communities to emphasize the importance of planning to long-term economic viability.

Your Town, Alabama is a direct response to the uncertain future of Alabama's small towns—a future increasingly threatened by large scale changes in our economy, population shifts, the impact of telecommunications and mass merchandising, and changes in land policy. In the face of these forces, communities have found themselves struggling to maintain their vitality and even their sense of identity. Whether the threat is sudden growth or stagnation, planning and design decisions can often make the difference between survival and decay, between healthy prosperity and decline.

The Your Town, Alabama workshop format is an intensive engagement of citizen leaders and professionals and focuses on these critical planning and design decisions. The workshop is highly participatory, with lectures, case-study presentations and interactive group problem solving, including working on realistic issues in a hypothetical small town.



**After thorough training, participants divided into groups and designed and presented a mock-up an actual small town.**



**The relaxed workshop atmosphere provided a great setting for participants to develop plans for their respective mock municipalities.**

Over 400 civic leaders in almost 100 municipalities around the state have attended Your Town, Alabama workshops. Alabama's first Your Town workshop was held in June of 1998 as a direct result of the efforts of an ad-hoc steering committee convened by Paul Kennedy, Coordinator of the Cawaco Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Council in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts' Your Town program. The Your Town, Alabama workshop offers real hope to real communities. People who care about their community's appearance have learned the value of planning through these workshops. The Cawaco RC&D Council and other partners are to be commended for contributing to this positive impact on rural Alabama communities.



## ***Life Beyond NRCS - A Peak into the Life of Retiree Gary Jones***

***by Julie A. Best, Public Affairs Specialist, NRCS, Auburn, AL***

Those of us in the working arena often long for retirement—more time to do those things that we enjoy. But, what will that really be like? I trailed Gary Jones recently, to see how he spends some of his retirement time.

Gary was in his 40<sup>th</sup> year of service with NRCS when he retired. He tells me it was an easy transition from work to retirement. Gary enjoyed his working years, but it was time for something else. Gary had two objectives going into retirement: spend time with family and do volunteer work. Volunteer work is not a new activity to Gary. He has worked with the Salvation Army and the Alabama Department of Human Resources in various ways for over 30 years, adopting needy families and helping at Christmas and Thanksgiving.

In anticipation of retirement, Gary interviewed several agencies and church groups to ascertain the charitable programs they offered. Since he was familiar with Salvation Army, he selected that organization as one of his volunteer groups. He serves as the Montgomery Salvation Army representation to the Tuskegee Veterans Administration (VA) Hospital. In that capacity, he attends quarterly meetings to represent the group. The Salvation Army works with VA to provide a Transition Center to assist veterans who have no place to live, who are down on their luck, or perhaps need assistance in finding employment. Gary



***Mr. Jackson is another one of Gary's new friends. Gary's granddaughter Madeline enjoys making rounds with her Granddaddy. She used to go to day camp in the summer; now that Gary is retired, she goes to Camp Grandpa!***

transports supplies to these facilities. When he goes to the Tuskegee VA hospital, he visits the patients who are there for medical attention to let them know someone cares about them.

On Mondays, Gary serves as a driver for a blind couple who are members of his church. Wherever they need to go, Gary provides the way. Gary says, "It gets a little wild sometimes with two dogs in the vehicle!" Actually, Gary is on call 24 hours a day, every day, to provide emergency assistance to this couple, but Monday is his assigned day for service.

Every Tuesday and Thursday Gary delivers Meals on Wheels. Meals on Wheels is the oldest and largest organization in the U.S. that provides meal services to people in need. The guiding principle of the organization is to help those men and women who are elderly, homebound, disabled, frail, or at risk. Gary provides the wheels and he picks up the meals from the VA hospital or one of the nursing homes, and then distributes the meals to the individuals on his routes. As a representative of Meals on Wheels, he checks on the health of each individual and determines if they need other assistance. "Meals on Wheels is a wonderful organization. It serves as an introduction—I give them their meal, and then I have an opportunity to visit with them and identify other needs that they may have. I may be the only person



***The average age of the persons on Gary's Meals on Wheels routes is 85. Pictured with Gary is Mr. Brown, who is a young 95 year old.***

## Personnel

### Accession

Bucky Howe, Jr., Soil Conservation Technician,  
Guntersville, AL

### Promotions

Larry Andrews, Soil Conservation Technician,  
Linden, AL

Fay Garner, Public Affairs Assistant, Auburn, AL  
Joyce Nicholas, Soil Conservationist, Marion, AL  
Joe Norris, Cartographic Technician, Auburn, AL  
Ramon Ortiz-Rodriguez, Soil Conservationist,  
Rainsville, AL

### Reassignments

Wade Hill, Soil Conservationist, Cullman, AL to  
Moulton, AL  
Jeff Holloway, Civil Engineer, Oxford, AL to Civil  
Engineer, NRCS, Athens, GA  
Bob Jones, State Conservationist, Auburn, AL to  
State Conservationist, Palmer, AK  
Gary Kobylski, Natural Resource Specialist,  
National Headquarters, Washington D.C. to  
State Conservationist, Auburn, AL  
James M. Mason, Soil Scientist, Luverne, AL to  
Hayneville, AL  
Ramon Ortiz-Rodriguez, Soil Conservationist,  
Rainsville, AL to Soil Conservationist,  
NRCS, Thomasville, GA

### Retirement

Randy Roe, Soil Conservation Technician,  
Columbiana, AL

### Resignations

Scott Guinn, Soil Conservationist, Moulton, AL

### Summer Intern

Evins Wiley, Tuskegee University, Bay Minette, AL



*Mrs. Jackson is very grateful for all the help that Gary provides. A nice warm meal, along with a few words of encouragement, makes a great difference in her day.*

they will see that day. It means a lot to them that someone takes time to talk with them for a few minutes.” One of the individuals on his route said, “I don’t know what we would do without him. He mows the lawn every two weeks. My husband is disabled, and Gary comes to help get him out of bed and into his wheelchair. Gary has been such a help to us.”

Gary says, “I have been blessed and I feel that each of us has a duty and responsibility to help others, it’s not an option. Now that I’m retired, I have the time to do these things. There are so many people in need, and I’m glad I can help. I enjoyed my work with NRCS, but I have never done anything that gives me a greater sense of worth than what I’m doing right now. I hope I can do this for a long time and I encourage others to become involved in ways that help those in need.”

Gary is just one of many NRCS retirees who are doing good deeds. Several retirees are still working with natural resource groups in some way. Many are involved with volunteer social service groups or church related groups. It seems to be the chicken and the egg situation. Are we civil servants because of our nature, or do we perform services for the benefit of the public because that’s our job? Whatever the reason, we seem to be a group that likes to help others. Service to others—that’s a characteristic to emulate, both on the job and in retirement.

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